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Taiwan To Curb A-Role

Agrees to Halt Nuclear Fuel Reprocessing

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Taiwan has agreed to stop all activities related to reprocessing of nuclear fuel following U.S. intelligence reports of secret atomic efforts, State Department officials disclosed yesterday.

The Nationalist Chinese pledge, which did not formally acknowledge clandestine activity, was made by Premier Chiang Ching-kuo in a Sept. 14 meeting with U.S. Ambassador Leonard Unger and reiterated in a diplomatic note Sept. 17. The substance of the note was made public yesterday in hearings on Taiwan's nuclear program before the Senate Foreign Relations subcommittee on arms control.

Assistant Secretary of State Arthur W. Hummel Jr. said any violation of its promises by Taiwan would "fundamentally jeopardize" U.S. nuclear cooperation. The United States is Taiwan's principal supplier of enriched uranium fuel for the island's ambitious nuclear power program.

The United States had been receiving intelligence reports for at least six months indicating that Taiwan had been secretly reprocessing spent uranium fuel, according to an Aug. 29 article by special correspondent Edward Schumacher in The Washington Post. Reprocessing of spent fuel is a method of obtaining plutonium, the essential ingredient for nuclear weapons.

The article also reported that Taiwan had nearly completed construction of a small-scale reprocessing facility at its Institute for Nuclear Energy Research at Lung Tan. This facility, built from parts obtained from sources throughout the world, was reported to be undergoing tests prior to operation.

The United States also had knowledge of Taiwanese interest in the purchase of larger-scale reprocessing fa-

cilities from European supplier nations, it was disclosed yesterday. The United States had discussions with Taiwan as well as potential supplier nations last spring and summer in an effort to head off such a sale, officials said.

After the Aug. 29 article, President Ford told senior members of the Joint Atomic Energy Committee in a White House meeting that he would take "appropriate action" on the Taiwan problem. Committee Chairman John O. Pastore (D-R.I.) said in a Senate speech that the possibility of Taiwan becoming a nuclear weapons state "is a matter of the gravest international concern which calls for swift and effective action" by the U.S. government.

Ambassador Unger called on Foreign Minister Shen Chiang-huan on Aug. 31 to discuss Taiwan's policy in the wake of the press reports, sources dis-

closed. This was followed by the meeting with Premier Chiang two weeks later.

The diplomatic note from Taiwan said that "the government of the Republic of China has no intention whatsoever to develop nuclear weapons or a nuclear explosive device, or to engage in any activities related to reprocessing purposes."

Under questioning by the Senate subcommittee, Fred C. Ikle, director of the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency, said the United States did not spell out the consequences if Taiwan continued reprocessing activity. But Ikle said the consequences were "clearly implied" by the close U.S. relationship in nuclear matters.

Ikle said he did not know what Taiwan will do with the small-scale reprocessing plant now that it has pledged to stop such activities. Taiwan asked the United States last October for permission to reprocess U.S. fuel in that plant. No reply to this request

was ever given, disarmament agency officials said.

The subcommittee headed by Sen. Stuart Symington (D-Mo.) also heard from CIA Director George Bush of U.S. intelligence reports of secret reprocessing on Taiwan. Bush's testimony was not made public, and senators declined to discuss it.

Any moves by Taiwan toward obtaining a nuclear weapons capability would prompt serious reactions. South Korea, Japan and other Asian states which have foresworn building atomic weapons, the officials testified. A Taiwanese bomb might also cause reaction in mainland China, which has developed atom and hydrogen bombs and missile delivery systems.

Hummel testified that Taiwan "has the economic and scientific base from which to develop nuclear weapons—a nuclear explosive device, should they choose to do so." He said the United States follows every aspect of Taiwan's nuclear program "with the utmost diligence" and views any deviation from its newly-stated policies with great seriousness.

According to Ikle, Taiwan recently suggested that two or three U.S. nuclear scientists become atomic energy advisers to its agencies to participate in projects in all its nuclear facilities. The proposal is under U.S. consideration at present, sources said.